



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Meeting with Governor Martinez focuses on Capital Outlay funding for Navajo communities



PHOTO: Governor Susana Martinez with Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Council Delegates Benjamin Bennett, Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Leonard Tsosie, and Seth Damon on Friday, February 5, 2016.

SANTA FE, N.M. – The New Mexico State Legislature held the 2016 American Indian Day on Friday, and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council took the opportunity to meet with several top state officials including New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez, to discuss several issues including funding for capital outlay projects on the Navajo Nation.

Each year, every member of the legislature is allocated funds for their respective communities for capital improvement projects, including communities on the Navajo Nation that are located in the state of New Mexico.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates along with Council Delegates Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Leonard Tsosie, Seth Damon, and Benjamin Bennett met with Gov. Martinez for over an hour to advocate for continued funding for projects ranging from the construction of parking lots, senior centers, water lines, and others.

Council members previously met with several state senators and representatives to share ideas on how the Navajo Nation and the state can better streamline the process for expending state funds and completing capital improvement projects on a more timely basis.

Currently, there are projects that are a strict timeline to be completed and several that may require the state to reauthorize them in order to allow additional time to complete construction.

Council members also met with New Mexico Rep. Don L. Tripp (Dist. 49 – R), who serves as the Speaker of the House, and Senator Mary Kay Papen (Dist. 38 – D) who currently serves as the Senate President Pro Tempore and discussed the possible impacts of legislations that are being considered by state lawmakers to address the state’s non-compliance with a federal law known as the “Real ID Act,” which was signed in 2005 and outlines certain requirements for states to follow in order to have ID’s issued by the state to be honored at the federal level.

The state of New Mexico currently does not comply with the requirements and therefore state ID’s are no longer honored by the federal government, resulting in several bills being introduced to resolve the issue. However, the issue has drawn concerns from several members of the Council over possible impacts for elderly Navajo people who do not currently have a birth certificate.

On Friday, Delegate Crotty urged lawmakers to consider amendments that would ease concerns of elderly Navajo people and to ensure that they are not negatively impacted by proposed changes to the law.

“Working directly with Navajo Nation citizens born before the 1970s, who currently do not have an official state birth certificate, I have concerns regarding Real ID federal requirements. An amendment to incorporate ‘Delayed Birth Certificate’ to authorize the State Register Director to review, create and register a delayed birth certificates would provide a solution for Navajo citizens without a birth certificate,” stated Delegate Crotty. “Navajo Nation Citizens have lived with this burden for too long and this is an opportunity for New Mexico lawmakers to consult with the Navajo Nation over these unique challenges of our people.”

Council members also conveyed their concerns and recommendations to the lawmakers and Gov. Martinez over several education issues including the need to provide certificates of completion for Navajo students on a more timely basis and the need to resolve bussing issues between counties that often results in having Navajo students being bused many miles across the state each day.

Speaker Bates also emphasized that the Navajo Nation Council looks to continue building stronger partnerships with state leaders and will continue to meet with officials from New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah to address issues that impact Navajo people and communities.

On Monday, several members of Council including Speaker Bates, Nathaniel Brown, Davis Filfred, Seth Damon, and Herman Daniels, Jr. met with Utah state leadership at the state capitol to discuss issues pertaining to education, infrastructure development, and others.

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